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NSC BRIEFING

12 November 1953

NSA review completed

INDOCHINA

I. Viet Minh attack against north side of  
Tonkin delta expected shortly.

A. Viet Minh 308th and 312th divisions  
plus two independent regiments in  
position and engaging in intense in-  
telligence reconnaissance.

1. Some elements have started infil-  
trating delta.

II. French state they expect attack from north  
about 20 november or soon thereafter.

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III. Largest battle of Indochina war took place in this area in January 1951.

A. Marshal Delattre repulsed frontal attack directed at Hanoi.

B. Objective of currently expected attack likely to be more limited than in 1951.

1. Enemy may try to take French posts along northern fringe of delta.

2. May try to cut communications between Hanoi and Haiphong.

IV. Meanwhile enemy reconnaissance noted near Lai Chau, French outpost in northwest Tonkin.

A. Possible one enemy division now west of delta may be concentrated against this area.

B. French would have little choice but to evacuate Lai Chau garrison.

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1. Would deal heavy blow to current guerrilla operations of tribal groups.

V. Probably <sup>T</sup>In anticipation of thrust from north, French last week abruptly pulled back some 20 battalions engaged in Operation Mouette south of delta.

A. General Cogne, French commander in Tonkin, suggested on 8 November he hoped to beat enemy to the punch in north.

VI. Despite public claims of important successes, French disappointed by enemy <sup>ability</sup> ~~reaction~~ <sup>to avoid Mouette op.</sup> ~~tion to Mouette.~~

25X1 A. [ ] one enemy division suffered casualties equivalent to one battalion. (1/9)

B. A second enemy division against which operation directed fell back on Thanh

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French maintain status -

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quo -

See no chance French

victory -

No real strategic objective

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